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INFORMATION ON GDR, METALLURGICAL PLANTS

[This report contains miscellaneous information on production, operations, and construction work at various metallurgical plants in the GDR (German Democratic Republic)].

The following reports have been received on various steel and rolling mills in the GDR.

Brandenburg Steel and Rolling Mill

The rolling of sectional steel is to be started by the end of 1951. The rolling mill is to be constructed by the Wildau Heavy Machine Building Plant. The blueprints, which are to be supplied by the Central Construction and Technology Bureau of the Main Administration for Metallurgy, Ministry of Heavy Industry, had not yet arrived at the Wildau Plant by the beginning of February 1951 so that neither the material requirements nor the models could be submitted.

At the beginning of March 1951, Siemens-Martin furnace VI was tapped.

The Five-Year Plan provides for an increase in the steel production of the Brandenburg Plant to 700,000 tons annually.

Riesa Steel and Rolling Mill

In March 1951, a new section-steel foundry went into operation at this plant which makes possible the casting of steel sections weighing up to 40 tons. In addition, alloy-steel castings can be produced in this foundry. The foundry's new workshop is 190 meters long and is equipped with two Siemens-Martin furnaces and several mold-drying ovens, core-baking ovens, and annealing furnaces.

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The Five-Year Plan provides for an increase in the steel production of the Riesa Plant to 600,000 tons annually.

In connection with the rolling of skelp at the finishing mill, a repeater was also designed for the high-speed section of this mill, which will make it possible to roll 14-20 millimeter round bars. These new methods reportedly will reduce the required personnel strength by two skilled workers per shift.

The Saechsische Zeitung of 14 March 1951 published a statement of the Riesa Plant's party leaders on the severe criticism made some time ago by the Central Committee of the SED (Socialist Unity Party) concerning the work at the Brandenburg Steel and Rolling Mill. The Riesa Plant's party leaders maintained that in fall 1950, almost all points made in the criticism could also have been correctly applied to the Riesa Plant, since, at that time, the plant was considerably behind in plan fulfillment. It has only been since reorganization that the plant's monthly production plans have been regularly fulfilled and exceeded.

To help the Brandenburg Steel and Rolling Mill train new workers, the Riesa Plant has been continuously training groups of three or four smelters from Brandenburg since mid-January 1951. In addition, the Riesa Plant places its own smelters and furnace instructors at the disposal of the Brandenburg Plant.

East Metallurgical Combine, Fuerstenberg/Oder

The second blast furnace is to be put into operation in July 1952 (probably should be 1951). The present plans for crude-steel production, differing from former reports, are given as 320,000 tons for 1952 and 520,000 tons for 1953. Construction of the rolling-mill installations is to be started in 1953; upon their completion, the annual outputs of the blooming mill and the plate-rolling mill are scheduled to be 600,000 and 240,000 tons of rolled steel, respectively.

At the beginning of February 1951, the foundation of blast furnace I was completed, and construction of the 70-meter-high chimney was started. The crane required for the installation work on blast furnace I was set up by the VVE Stahlbau (People-Owned Enterprise for Steel Construction). A large excavation was made in front of the foundation for the ore bunker. Foundations for the future machine shop were laid in the vicinity of blast furnace I.

As at the Brandenburg Steel and Rolling Mill, considerable difficulties and critical problems arose in connection with the construction of the East Metallurgical Combine. The following criticism was contained in a report of an Inspection Commission of the FDGB (League of Free German Trade Unions) Directorate: "Construction was started by the administrations without all the required plans being on hand. The transportation facilities are not regulated according to the requirements of the plant and the workers. The barracks and sanitary facilities are in bad condition. Medical care for the workers is inadequate." The Ministry of Heavy Industry was reproached for not adequately coordinating the work at the metallurgical combine. The Inspection Commission recommended that brigades, composed of outstanding specialists, organizers, and trade-union functionaries from the Brandenburg and Maxhuetten steel plants, the shipyards, etc., be formed to visit the East Metallurgical Combine regularly. It was suggested to the Ministry of Construction that the experiences in connection with the construction of the Polish "Nowa Huta" plant be studied and utilized for the construction of the East Metallurgical Combine.

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Maxhuette Plant, Unterwellenborn

The Selbke RAW (Railroad Repair Shop) complained considerably about the quality of the Maxhuette Plant's products: "The material which is delivered by the rolling mill in Unterwellenborn is very unsuitable for further processing. If processed in the forge, the workpieces burst open like a cauliflower; if processed mechanically, they exhibit hairline cracks after the outer layer has been removed; in either case, they must be scrapped."

Groeditz Steel Plant

In 1951, this plant is scheduled to deliver twice the quantity of blooms that it delivered in 1950. This goal is to be achieved mainly by further development of the rapid smelting method. This process provides that part of the charge be in liquid form; thus, the time required for the smelting process, the average duration of which was formerly 7 hours and 24 minutes, is allegedly reduced by 22 percent. This new process will supposedly also lower production costs by 20-25 Deutsche marks per ton. Scrap is the main raw material used at the Groeditz Steel Plant.

At the beginning of March 1951, a 95-ton anvil block for a steam-hammer plant was cast at the Groeditz Steel Plant for the first time in the GDR. Up to then, castings of this type could allegedly be produced in West Germany only. To cast the anvil block, two furnaces were tapped simultaneously, so that the 95 tons of liquid steel could be fed into the mold. Four additional anvil blocks are scheduled to be cast at the Groeditz Steel Plant in the near future.

"Willi Becker" Rolling Mill, Kirchmoeser

The rolling process is to be further mechanized at this plant, so that the 1951 output can be considerably higher than the 1950 output. To date, a 25-percent increase in production has been achieved by the introduction of a new method of rolling wire. It is also planned to improve the quality of the 1951 production. In this connection, Forster, director of the rolling mill, wrote: "Although we have succeeded thus far in producing good-quality products with the available means, we could not meet all the quality specifications of the consumer. It is necessary that we expand the straightening section of our heavy-plate rolling mill. By the end of the third quarter 1951, we want to be able to deliver completely satisfactory plate, which is correctly cut, annealed, and straightened." According to Forster, the improvement of the quality of the products is not only a question of the plant's technical equipment, but also involves the rolling-mill workers' qualifications. For this reason, advanced vocational courses are to be given on rolling mills, electric-power technology, and materials. To further improve the work, the work methods are to be basically changed to conform to Soviet methods, so that the plant's personnel strength will be in the ratio of one office employee to ten production workers. At present, 200 apprentices are being trained. The plant's main product is reportedly spring steel.

Burg Rolling Mill, Near Magdeburg

At the end of February 1951, a new hot-rolling mill was put into operation; the parts for this mill were produced in the GDR. Thus, in addition to rolling structural steel plate, as it has been doing in the past, the plant will be in a position to roll thin plate less than one millimeter thick, dynamo sheet iron, and transformer sheet. The sheets will be further treated in a new production shop, 1,400 square meters in size.

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The third cupola furnace, which was put into operation at the beginning of January 1951, has a capacity of 6 tons per hour. About 300 workers are employed in the plant's cast-iron foundry.

Georg Schwarz Steel Plant, Olbersdorf

As a result of a lack of orders at the plant, caused by a shortage of materials, some of the skilled workers had to be assigned to odd jobs (yard and transportation work) during January 1951.

Halle Pump Works, Halle/Saale

A process for producing molding sand from slag has been developed which allegedly will eliminate the necessity of building large crushers, and will thus result in the saving of all investment funds provided for this purpose.

In this process, the slag, which is removed from the cupola furnace when red-hot, is chilled with water and granulated, so that small slag splinters, rather than large pieces, are obtained, and can be ground to dust in the ball mills.

Merseburg Metalworks

After the Leipzig spring fair, the Merseburg Metalworks was ordered to be the first plant in the GDR to produce aluminum foil, which constitutes a bottleneck in the GDR. Allegedly, the capacity of the plant is to be sufficient to cover the requirements of all branches of industry. In addition to the electrical industry, the food and beverage and the cigarette industries are to be supplied with aluminum foil for packaging.

Lauta Aluminum Plant

This plant, formerly one of the largest aluminum-producing plants in Europe, was completely dismantled by the Soviets. Reconstruction work, which has already been started, is to be speeded up, and the first phase of the large-scale reconstruction project is scheduled for completion by fall 1951. Thus far, an aluminum and iron foundry has been constructed. The plant is being constructed by order of the Main Department for Chemistry, Ministry of Heavy Industry. The Lauta Plant employed 3,500 workers in 1938 and 6,000 workers during the war.

Products Exhibited at Leipzig Fair

At the Leipzig spring fair, the VVB GUS (Federation of People-Owned Enterprises for Cast and Forged Products) exhibited a group of new types of foundry products, for example, equipment for the cement industry, made of cast steel with a high chromium content; the outstanding characteristic of this product reportedly is its resistance to stress. Cast-iron parts are produced in the Doelzschen Foundry by a new method which uses cupola-slag cement. Recently, slides for zip-pers, which formerly had to be pressed, were produced for the first time by a simple die-casting process. In addition, cast parts were exhibited which were produced from iron or light metal instead of nonferrous metals. For example, aluminum parts were displayed which had been produced by the Krupp casting method, with considerable savings in nonferrous metals.

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Furthermore, the VVB GUS exhibited grooved rolls and large cast parts for rolling mills and other basic industrial enterprises, chilled rolls in three grades of hardness, and cast-steel rolls produced by the Hennigsdorf Steel-Casting Plant. Among the large cast parts were a revolving grate for a gas generator and a cylinder liner for ship engines.

The Heidenau Die and Pressure-Casting Foundry in Sachsen, which belongs to SAG (Soviet Corporation) "Kabel," exhibited cast parts produced by the pressure-die-casting method for aluminum, magnesium, zinc, and brass alloys. These cast parts reportedly excel in accuracy and uniformity. The pressure-die-casting method is economical only when at least 3,000 cast parts are to be produced, since it involves the use of pressure-die-casting molds made of high-grade alloy steel.

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